



# Media Reality ✓ Check

A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored ☐ [www.mediaresearch.org](http://www.mediaresearch.org)

Anchor Silent On Story Featured On CBS's *Early Show*, *Face the Nation*, and *Weekend Evening News*

## Rather's Bizarre Boycott of Condit Scandal

Dan Rather apparently feels every CBS News program, with the exception of the Monday through Friday *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather*, has shown a lack of journalistic restraint by reporting on the official police investigation into the disappearance of Chandra Levy, who until recently was the girlfriend of married Democratic Congressman Gary Condit.

Rather broke his own highly-publicized silence on the case on Wednesday, grandly proclaiming that after eleven weeks "there is news tonight of national note in the case of missing person 24-year-old Chandra Levy." CBS's Jim Stewart then reported that some FBI investigators told him that Washington, D.C. police had focused too much on Condit's potential role in the former federal intern's disappearance.

Last night's *Evening News* report seemed designed to bolster Rather's argument that the Condit story had received too much media attention: "Justice Department sources say there is also growing uneasiness among prosecutors over the public spectacle the case has become," Stewart proclaimed. "Prosecutors are said to be particularly unhappy over the multiple press appearances local police make each day with essentially nothing to report."

At no time on last night's broadcast did CBS reveal the fact that Condit is a Democrat, following the pattern established by other network news programs during the first several weeks of this story. Last week, MRC reported that only 14 of the 179 network news stories that had been aired through July 11 mentioned Condit's Democratic ties.

But until last night, Rather hadn't mentioned Condit at all. This morning in an appearance on WFAN's *Imus in the Morning* radio program, which is simulcast on MSNBC, he continued to distance himself from journalists who have covered the Condit story: "First of all, the facts are so few. You know, we've got rumors, speculation, gossip, innuendo, and, you know, we decided, I decided to try to exercise some restraint. You know, maybe we should have done

something with it. I don't think so."

"If the Congressman were accused, much less charged, he'd be entitled to presumption of innocence until proven guilty beyond any reasonable doubt in a court of law," Rather continued. "I still think there is the real danger that an innocent person could be convicted in the court of public opinion on the basis of rumor, gossip and speculation."

**While Dan Rather waited, CBS's *The Early Show* broadcast a total of 50 stories, *Face the Nation* featured it on July 8 and July 15, and Saturday and Sunday editions of the *Evening News* ran a total of six stories.**

Yet Rather insisted, "I have no argument with these other journalists who have made other judgments."

"Other journalists" would include those at CBS's *The Early Show*, who have run a total of 50 stories on Condit's scandal since mid-May. It

would include Bob Schieffer and the producers of CBS's *Face the Nation*, which discussed the Condit story on July 8 and July 15. And it would have to include Rather's colleagues who produce the Saturday and Sunday editions of *CBS Evening News*, whose weekend broadcasts have contained half a dozen Condit stories.

Imus asked Rather if he had shown a similar reluctance to report sexual harassment charges leveled against GOP Senator Bob Packwood back in 1992, and Rather seemed to repudiate his own past coverage: "I think the Packwood thing was another feeding frenzy and unfortunately we took part in it in a way that I wish we hadn't." The scandal forced Packwood to quit the Senate in 1995.

Condit has been questioned by the police three times, his apartment searched, his DNA submitted to police, and his own attorney held a televised news conference to reveal the Congressman's polygraph results. Is there anyone in America who honestly believes that, if Condit were a conservative Republican, Dan Rather would have remained quiet for eleven weeks? — *Rich Noyes*

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Editors; Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Patrick Gregory, Ken Shepherd, Brad Wilmouth, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. For the latest evidence of media bias, read the *CyberAlert* at [www.mrc.org](http://www.mrc.org).